

comparatively speaking in less time, and, in some cases, with less sustained effort than at athletics.

Games have a greater show value too. A little encouragement will arouse the necessary interest in athletics as well.

Will the Panjabis, to whatever community they belong, make the necessary effort to discover talent

and make available to potential athletes opportunities of right training in order that they may win for India its rightful place in the athletic contests of the world?

Interest in athletics will also serve to broaden the outlook of the Panjabis in social matters and help to remove their bigotry, which they are now displaying in the matter of language and other communal issues.

## Ardas or The Sikh Congregational Prayer

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**A**RDĀS is a Sanskrit word, from the root, *ard* to ask, to beg, to pray, and *ās*, means wish, hope, desire. To ask for what you desire is, *ardās*, that is, prayer. Prayer to God is a basic religious activity in Sikh religion. "He, Who has the power to confer fearlessness and solace, before Him, pray.\* "God is omniscient, He is omnipotent, He can right that which hath gone wrong; Nanak, therefore,

advises, in humility stand up and pray before Him alone and no other."\*\* "In all difficulties pray to God, for, verily God helpeth man out of his troubles."\*\*\* "He Who is the Overlord of the earth; He, Who is the King of kings; He Who governs all the universes; He Who is omnipotent and almighty; before that true Light pray that He may end your sufferings."\*\*\*\*

\**sukhdātā bhai bhanjio tis āge kar ardās*—Guru Granth. Sri Rag V.

\*\**āpe jāne kare ap ape āne rās, tis age nānaka khale kice ardās*—Ibid. Var Maru IV.

\*\*\**kītā loḍīe kam so hari pai ākhie, kāraj dei savār*—Ibid. Var Sri Rag Pauri IV.

\*\*\*\**jāke vas khān sultān, jāke vas hai sakal jāhān jāka kiā sab kich hoe, tis te bāhar nahi koe, koh benanti apne satgur pai*.—Ibid. Gauri. V

The institution of prayer is almost wholly alien to Hinduism and Hindu religious tradition. The basic activity and rite of the Vedic religion or Brahmanism is *yajñā* or sacrifice, the essence of which is persuasion of a deity to do what the sacrificer desires. It is the right technique that is of supreme importance in a *yajñā*, and not the mental attitude, which is the essence of prayer. The basic activity of Hinduism is *pūjā* or worship which is genenerally that of a sanctified icon, the *arcā*, in which divine life has been inspired through specified rituals. *Pūjā* is not an act of prayer. It is an act of homage including that of entertainment. A devotee may ask for a boon at the feet of the idol, *prarathanā*, but the fulfilment of this wish is clearly contingent upon the efficacy of his worship. The God's feet are washed and he is offered betel nuts, as would be done in the case of an honoured guest. The icon is ceremoniously awakened from his bed in the morning with music and it is offered flower garlands, incense and food of which it eats the subtle part, leaving the gross food, *sitprāsād*, for the worshipper. In large temples, the icon-god is taken to bed at night to join his wives, or *saktis*, and he is entertained by dancers, the *devādāsīs* during the day.

#### Absence of Prayer in Tantrism

In the comparatively modern Vedic cult of *tantrism*, the iconical formalised deity is simply compelled, through appropriate rites, to perform what the agent desires. In all this, the basic elements of prayer are essentially lacking. The basic activity of Buddhism is meditation and that Jainism, *tapās*, austerities, both of which are essentially non-theistic solitary and individualistic practices and Buddhism and Jainism being essentially asocial religions, the question of a congregational practice of religion does not arise in their case. Indeed, in Buddhist *caityās*, Jain monastries and larger Hindu temples the devotees do congregate to listen to religious discourses and exposition of religious texts, but this is not a religious activity as such; it is only subsidiary to the practice of religion.

Congregational practice of a basic activity of religion is likewise foreign to early Hinduism, though it developed in some medieval sects, such as the Caitanya and the Vallabhacarya. Ordinarily, a Hindu worshipper goes to the temple alone, or with friends and family, makes his offerings and departs. Sometimes, he may linger there to watch the act of worship by regular devotees in a well-endowed

temple, but he and others form an audience and not a congregation.

The basic activity of Sikhism is *simran*, communion with God through the *yogic* discipline of Name: its obligated and mandatory context is *sevā*, loving service of fellow beings and prayer is the prescribed vitality of this activity. Prayer supports *simran*, which grows and matures in the social context. Congregational prayer is, thus, an essentially Sikh institution in India.

#### Communal Worship

The Sikh congregational prayer is a product of communal composition, and has developed through various stages of Sikh history as a result of a consensus of Sikh opinion. The opening part of this prayer, relating to the invocation of the first nine Sikh Gurus, is an excerpt from a Panjabi composition of Guru Gobind Singh. It is called *Var Sri Bhagautiji ki*, which is an abbreviated metrical version of a chapter of Markandeya Puran called, *Durgasaptsati*, 700 verses of which have been condensed into 55 stanzas. The story of the text describes a titanic struggle during the hoary age of mythology, between the opposing forces of evil and good, in which divine aid weighs the scales in favour of the good. The opening stanza of this translated

composition is an original composition of Guru Gobind Singh, as the traditional *manglācarnā*, divine invocation, and is not a part of the adapted version.

At the time of the prayer, the whole congregation must stand in humility, with palms joined in the oriental fashion, facing the throne of the Guru Granth which is usually there, but when it is not there, the whole congregation must face any one direction of the compass. Any one member of the congregation, irrespective of sex or social station, for, there is no ordained priestly class amongst the Sikhs, may lead the prayer. The leader then cites the prayer, pronouncing it audibly and in measured tones and the rest of the congregation formally associate themselves with the prayer by repeating in unison, "Glory be to God" (*vāhegūrū*), at prescribed intervals.

This is a translation of the Sikh congregational prayer:

'Formless-form. To God, the abiding Victory.

#### Composition of the 10th King

'To begin with, we invoke the divine Spirit of God and we remember Guru Nanak. (This Spirit) which then inspired Gurus Angad, Amar Das and Ram Das.

'We call upon the Gurus, Arjun, Har Gobind, and Hari Rai.

'Let us invoke the blessed Har Krishan whose vision heals the pains.

'Let us call upon Guru Tegh Bahadur that the Kingdom of Heaven\* may come to earth.

'May, (the God and the Gurus) help us everywhere. Tenth King, Gobind Singh, may He help us everywhere.

'The Spirit of all the ten Kings enshrined in the visible Body and the Word of the Guru Granth, concentrate upon that, and say sires, Glory be to God.'

The congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'Five Beloved Ones,\*\* Four Princes\*\*\* Forty Saved Ones\*\*\*\* those who have remained steadfast in suffering, those who have kept constant remembrance of God, those who renounced the sense pleasures, those who have constantly lived in the Divine Presence, those who have loved their neighbours by sharing

their possessions with them, those who have turned a blind eye to the faults and failings of others, those who have assuaged the hunger and want of the hungry and the needy, those who have persevered in their fight in the cause of justice, concentrate your minds on the struggle and achievements of those, O, revered members of the Order of the Khalsa, and say, Glory be to God' The congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'The Singhs of both the sexes, who courted martyrdom in the cause of religion and underwent unspeakable sufferings by being dismembered alive, broken on the wheel, sawed alive, and boiled alive and those who made sacrifices in the service of the centres of the Sikh religion, the *gurdvārās*, but never wavered in their faith and remained steadfast in the cause of Sikhism to the last hair of their body and to their last breath, O, revered members of the Khalsa Order, concentrate your minds on the glorious deeds of those, and utter, 'Glory be to God'.

\*Literally "the Nine Treasures." which idiom signifies spiritual abundance and material prosperity.

\*\*The first five initiates, representative of the mankind, the original member of the Order of the Khalsa.

\*\*\*The four sons of Guru Gobind Singh, who all laid down their lives in the cause of religion.

\*\*\*\*Forty Sikhs, who after a momentary wavering, laid down their lives in the cause of religion, in 1740 A.D. in the battle of Mukatasar, in the Indian Punjab.

The congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'Think of the Four Seats of Authority of the Religion,\* and all the centres from where the good Religion is preached, and say, 'Glory be to God.

The congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'First, we pray on behalf of all the creatures of God:\*\* May the presence of God be progressively felt in the hearts of all the sentient creatures, and may the whole creation become happy and prosperous thereby. (Then) may God shower His blessings upon and grant protection to each and every member of the Order of the Khalsa, wherever he is.

'May the supplies of the Khalsa ever remain replenished.

'May the Sword of the Khalsa be ever victorious.

'May the royal title of the Khalsa\*\*\* be universally recognized and honoured.

'May victory attend upon all just endeavours of the Panth, the Khalsa Commonwealth.

'May the arms and armaments be our constant ally.

'May the Order of the Khalsa achieve ever-expanding progress and supremacy.

'Sires, say, 'Glory be to God.'

The congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'May God grant to the Sikhs, the gift of faith, the gift of the uncut hair, the gift of discipline, the gift of discrimination, the gift of mutual trust, the gift of self confidence and the supreme gift of all gifts, the gift of communion with God, the Name, and may the Sikhs freely centre around the dip in the holy tank of Amritsar.

'May the government centres, the banners, the cantonments of the Khalsa ever remain inviolate.

'May the cause of truth and justice prevail everywhere and at all times.

'Sires, utter 'Glory be to God.'

The Congregation: 'Glory be to God.'

'May the passions in the minds of the Sikhs remain calm and reason flow clear. And may reason always be guided by the light of God.

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\*The four seats of authority competent to exegetise and guide the Sikhs in matters of faith and religion, the Akal Takhat at Amritsar, the Kesh Garh at Anandpur, the Janam Asthan at Patna and Hazur Sahib at Nanded, Deccan.

\*\**sarbat khālsā* signifies the whole of mankind and all sentient creatures in the Sikh idiom in contradistinction to the term *samūh khālsā*, which signifies all the members of the Order of the Khalsa.

\*\*\**birad kī paij*, Sanskrit, *biruda*, which means royal titles and surnames, regal pretensions and claims. *Khālsā* is a *biruda*.



'God, Almighty, our Protector and Helper ever, restore to us the right and privilege of unhindered management and free service of and access to the Nankana Sahib, and other centres of the Sikh religion, the *gurdavārās*, out of which we have been evicted.

'God, the Helper of the helpless, the Strength of the weak, the Support of the fallen, the true Father of all, Lord God,'

Here, the specific purpose and occasions for the prayer is stated by the leader in suitable terms and the blessings and aid of God are besought.

'God, forgive us our remissnesses, extend Thy helping hand to all and every one.

'Grant us the company of those who may help keep Thy name fresh in our hearts.

'May Thy name, the religion preached by Nanak, prevail and prosper, forever and forever.

'May Thy will be done wherein lies the good of all. The Khalsa is of God, and to Him the victory.\*

Here the whole congregation bow to God by touching the ground with their foreheads, as is the oriental fashion, and then the whole congregation stand up and chant in unison the following two litanical couplets:

- (1) The will of God hath ordained the Order of the Khalsa.

This is the final commandment to all the Sikhs: Accept Granth as the Guru. Deem the revered Guru Granth as the visible body of all the Gurus. He, who hath disciplined his soul, shall behold confirmation thereof in the Revelation itself".\*\*

- (2) The Khalsa will rule and none shall successfully defy them. All shall have to petition for their alliance, after bitter frustration, for the world will eventually be redeemed through the protection that the Order of the Khalsa alone affords."\*\*\*

The whole congregation then shout a full throated cry of *Sai Srī Akāl*, the Eternal God is the only Reality, and the prayer is over, and the whole congregation then take their seats.\*\*\*\*

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\*This translation has been made from the congregational prayer approved by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, included in the hymnal, *Sundargutka* Amritsar, 1951. deep, 169-73.

\*\**āgyā bhāi ākāl ki tābi calāo pañth, sab sikhān ko hukam hai gurū mānio; grānth gurū grānth jī manio pargāt gurān ki deh, jān ko hirda sudh hai khoj sabad mai leh*

\*\*\**rāj karega khālsā yaqī rahe na koi, khuar hoe sab milenge bace sarn jo hoe*

\*\*\*\*This article forms a chapter in the forthcoming book by the author, *The Balsakhi* of Guru Gobind Singh, published by the Hind Publishers Ltd., Jullundur, Pb., Price Rs. 10/- only.